

March 8, 2000

Congressman Norm Dicks
United States Congress
2467 Rayburn Office building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: \$8.6 million request for FY 2001 to continue design and implementation of Hatchery Reform in Puget Sound and Western Washington.

Dear Congressman Dicks:

Thanks to your leadership and that of Senator Gorton, Congress appropriated \$3.6 million for FY 2000 to design and implement Hatchery Reform in Puget Sound and Western Washington. While the appropriations language requires a full report to Congress on the progress of this effort by June, 2000, the need to secure second-year funding prompts this interim update and request.

As you'll recall, this effort began in October, 1998, when the precipitous decline of natural stocks of coho and chinook threatened fisheries and prompted listings under the federal Endangered Species Act. Senator Gorton convened a group of scientists to examine the potential for using hatcheries to support fisheries while simultaneously aiding and not hindering recovery of natural stocks. The recommendations of our proposal (*The Reform of Salmon and Steelhead Hatcheries in Puget Sound and Coastal Washington to Recover Natural Stocks while Providing Fisheries*, attached) were codified and money appropriated to carry them out. The Science Team recommends level funding under the same categories and using the same language for FY 2001, with an additional \$5 million for capital improvements (which was included in our original proposal but deferred until FY2001 at your request).

Contracts to commence the hatchery reform project and spend the federal FY2000 funds were signed January 10, 2000. I'm happy to report significant cooperation and progress, since that time. We've begun with a critical shift in thinking—agreement on a new definition and new set of purposes for hatcheries in Puget Sound and western Washington. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC), representing the co-managers, and the Congressionally-mandated independent Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) agreed March 3, 2000 that the purpose of hatcheries is to, "help recover and conserve naturally spawning populations while providing for sustainable fisheries." Achieving this purpose will drive all planning and decision making to follow. It will dictate how the design and management of Puget Sound and Coastal hatcheries is implemented.

Hatchery Reform Coordinating Committee

Congress directed Long Live the Kings (LLTK) to “facilitate the co-managers design and implementation of hatchery reform...” LLTK convened a meeting of the co-managers in September, 1999 at which time the co-managers requested a Coordinating Committee be formed. That committee met in December, 1999. It’s role is to ensure a successful working relationship between the co-managers and the independent science panel (Hatchery Scientific Review Group) created by congress to guide reform. The Coordinating Committee will ensure that the recommendations of the HSRG are implemented by the agencies, and that all current processes and policies affecting hatcheries are reviewed and reconfigured or amended as necessary. The Coordinating Committee is comprised of the leadership of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, the three members of the Science Team that did not transition to the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG), and Long Live the Kings.

Hatchery Scientific Review Group (asking \$300,000 FY2001)

In FY2000, Congress directed that a Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) be established to ensure an independent scientific foundation for hatchery reform. The HSRG has been formed and includes five independent scientists, nominated by the American Fisheries Society, and four agency scientists (complete list attached). The group met formally for the first time March 1-3, 2000 in SeaTac, Washington, to clarify its purpose and goals, to create a framework within which to make decisions, and to establish a work plan and timeline to help it accomplish its objectives. Based on the most immediate needs, the HSRG also reviewed 42 grant applications and awarded \$500,000 for scientific research projects which will help inform decisions critical to achieving hatchery reform. The HSRG deferred consideration of an additional \$200,000 worth of projects until its April, 2000 meeting, pending further information-gathering.

On March 3, 2000, the HSRG and the Coordinating Committee met together and agreed upon the purposes, goals, and the outline of a framework for decision making and measuring success. They identified tasks, made assignments, and set the dates for April and May three-day workshops leading up to the June, 2000 report to Congress. Long Live the Kings has taken on the role of facilitating and staffing both the Coordinating Committee and the HSRG.

\$300,000 in FY2001 will ensure the HSRG can continue to produce guidelines and set benchmarks for recommended actions; ensure the goals of hatchery reform are carried out; identify scientific needs; and manage a competitive grant program for scientific research relating to hatchery reform. Specifically, this funding supports the independent scientists on the HSRG and the administrative costs of the HSRG.

Agency Science: Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (asking \$800,000 FY2001)

The HSRG and the Coordinating Committee agree that after establishing the purposes and goals of hatchery reform, we must next establish and understand the baseline. Then we can build an implementation plan to get us from where we are to where we need to be. The co-managers have committed to complete Hatchery Genetic Management Plans (HGMP) for each species at each of the 100 hatcheries in Puget Sound. These plans will not only provide a picture of how stocks and hatcheries are currently being managed, but will also be the mechanism through which reform can be implemented at individual hatcheries. HGMPs are due to be completed by June 30, 2000; and the co-managers hope to integrate their plans for a complete picture of how and to what ends hatcheries are being managed in Puget Sound by September 30, 2000.

The HSRG has identified completion of the Hatchery Genetic Management Plans as a top priority. The National Marine Fisheries Service also will rely on completed HGMPs as the basis for its decisions about the degree to which hatchery practices in Puget Sound constitute “take” of listed salmonids.

\$800,000 in FY 2001 will fund participation on the HSRG by WDFW, NWIFC, USFWS, and NMFS scientists. It will also ensure that the scientific teams assembled by WDFW and the NWIFC can complete the HGMPs. In addition, this funding will support the agencies’ work to generate and maintain scientific data bases; analyze existing data; determine and undertake needed experiments; purchase scientific equipment; develop technical support infrastructures; and initiate changes to the hatcheries based on their findings. It is expected that these teams will work closely with the HSRG on developing and applying methods for monitoring and measuring success.

Scientific Research (asking \$900,000 FY2001)

The HSRG’s ability to recommend specific strategies which will most effectively achieve our goals is compromised by lack of scientific certainty on many subjects. The HSRG has prioritized research needs and will award \$700,000 in a competitive grant program to those research projects that will help answer questions such as how to reduce harvest on wild fish, how to avoid adverse genetic impacts of hatchery fish on wild stocks, how to avoid adverse ecological interactions, how to improve hatchery practices, how to monitor and measure success, and so forth. A formal communication of the rationale, criteria, and methods of evaluation will be provided by June, 2000.

\$700,000 in FY 2001 funding will enable a second year of competitive grant awards for independent scientific research related to hatchery reform. An additional \$200,000 will go to WDFW and the NWIFC for in-house scientific research. Decisions about how to spend that \$200,000 to greatest effect will be made upon the recommendations of the HSRG.

Hatchery Practices (asking \$1.4 million FY2001)

Hatchery Reform is not happening in a vacuum. For the last several years, the co-managers have recognized the need to minimize adverse genetic and other ecological impacts of hatchery fish in the wild. They've also created policies to minimize and avoid disease at hatcheries and to increase survival. For FY2000, Congress appropriated \$1.4 million to be divided between WDFW and the NWIFC, with \$50,000 to the USFWS, to create and begin implementing new performance objectives, new monitoring and evaluation programs, staff training, and to make some initial improvements in the hatcheries themselves. The agencies and the HSRG are in the midst of a decision making process to determine how this money will be spent in 2000. We will provide you an update on this in June, 2000.

\$1.4 million in FY 2001 funding will enable the agencies to implement the recommendations of the HSRG through the HGMPs. Because these changes need to be made in concert with the recommendations of the HSRG, we will have a more complete assessment of what's needed by October, 2000.

Hatchery Improvements (asking \$5 million FY 2001)

The state of Washington and the Washington Treaty Tribes operate the largest system of hatcheries in the world. Puget Sound and coastal hatcheries were created—almost exclusively—for one purpose, to produce fish for harvest. We've changed the purpose. To manage and operate a system of hatcheries designed to provide for sustainable fisheries and the recovery and conservation of naturally spawning populations will require extensive capital improvements. Some hatcheries are themselves physical impediments to upstream migration of wild fish. Many hatcheries cannot accommodate the need to mark all hatchery fish to differentiate them from wild. In cases where hatcheries are being retrofitted to help achieve recover of wild stocks, we'll need acclimation ponds and adult trapping capability. Decisions about where to direct this money will be made in the context of the HSRGs framework for implementation of reform which will not be complete until October, 2000.

\$5 million in FY 2001 funding will enable WDFW and NWIFC to tackle the most immediate and critical facility needs in order to achieve hatchery reform. This is by no means an extravagant ask. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is asking the Washington state legislature to consider funding \$45 million in repairs, reconfigurations, closures, and other changes to its hatchery facilities—in advance of the more targeted recommendations of the HSRG.

Facilitation and Communication (asking \$200,000 FY2001)

Concerned that creation of an independent scientific review team would not in itself ensure implementation of reform, Congress directed Long Live the Kings to “facilitate the co-managers design and implementation of hatchery reform.” A critical first step—

agreed to by the co-managers and the Science Team—was for LLTK to facilitate the formation and work product of the HSRG. LLTK arranged and staffed the first three-day workshop of the HSRG, helping to get it established, agree upon its purpose, goals, create a decision-making framework, set up a competitive grants program, and coordinate its efforts with the co-managers through a Coordinating Committee to ensure its recommendations will be implemented. LLTK has committed to continue this role at least until the HSRG creates its own administrative infrastructure. Additionally, LLTK has assumed responsibility for creating an outreach and communications strategy to ensure that the co-managers design and implementation of hatchery reform is informed by and communicated to stakeholders, the state legislature, the public, and Congress. The communications strategy will be more fully developed by June, 2000.

\$200,000 in FY2001 will enable LLTK to continue its coordination, facilitation, and communications work on behalf of the co-managers and the HSRG as they continue to refine and implement hatchery reform.

We are grateful for your continued leadership and support of this endeavor, and we will work with your staff to schedule opportunities for you to see first-hand some of the changes your investment has fostered in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Peter Bergman for

Science Team

Peter Bergman, Ph.D, Northwest Marine Technology

Lee Blankenship, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Donald Campton, Ph.D, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Frank Haw, Northwest Marine Technology

Conrad Mahnken, Ph.D, National Marine Fisheries Service

Terry Wright, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

Attachments:

FY2001 Budget

FY2000 Appropriations Language

The Reform of Salmon and Steelhead Hatcheries in Puget Sound and Coastal Washington to Recover Natural Stocks While Providing Fisheries (May 7, 1999)

CC: Lesley Turner

Gary Smith

Barbara Cairns